

March 3, 2009

Dixie Fechtel
1414 Park Dr
Leesburg, FL 34748

Dear Ms Fechtel,

As promised, I am responding in writing to your formal submission of a “Request for Re-evaluation of Library Materials.”

Over the past few weeks I have completed reading the second of the two books you listed in your filing on the Gossip Girls Series, specifically the title Only in Your Dreams. I had already read The Bermudez Triangle in August when I first learned of your concerns with the book. I have also done extensive research into the holdings of the libraries in Lake County and in our neighboring counties. I have found that all of the libraries in Lake County and our neighboring counties have copies of the Gossip Girls series and in every case they are labeled and shelved with other young adult materials. In the case of The Bermudez Triangle, only one other Lake County Library holds that title; they also shelve the book in the young adult collection. The neighboring counties of Orange, Osceola, Marion, Volusia and Sumter each have at least one copy and some of those are shelved with adult materials and some with the young adult.

In addition to reading each of these books, I researched the reviews on them. In every case they are reviewed by several sources as written for young adults for grade 9 or 10 and ages 14 or 15 and up. On the cover of Only in Your Dreams the notation is for “ages 15 and up.” I also reviewed the very excellent website, www.factsonfiction.org, which you noted in response to section #4 on the form “What reviews of this material have you read?”

Your response to section #1 of the form states that you object to the “sexually explicit nature of material targeted at children under the age of 18” for both of these books. In the section on the website Facts on Fiction for Sexual Content neither book contains “Mature Discussion About Sex: but there is “Sexual Innuendo” in both and “Sexual Activity Without Explicit Details.” You indicated in question #6 that you did not “perceive any positive value in the use of the material” for both books and Facts on Fiction agrees with you for The Gossip Girls – it is purely for entertainment and the book cover contains a quote that it is “Sex in the City for the younger set” (from Teen People). However, the Facts on Fiction website you provided for review indicated that there were four areas of “positive elements” for the Bermudez Triangle; two of them are considered to be the “Theme of the Entire Book” those being “Positive Group Action and/or Traits (community, cooperation, friendship, encouragement, etc)” and “Positive Personal Action and/or Traits (courage, honor, integrity, etc.)” In fact, under More Details on the positive elements, the reviewer states “Throughout the book, the elements of loyalty and friendship abound.”

As a parent, I admire your concerns about ensuring the reading and viewing choices made by your daughter are appropriate for her. As a librarian, I must attempt to meet the needs of this diverse community. There are any number of items that will offend this person or that. A book or video that you would consider perfect for your child may be the complete opposite for another parent. The list of items that have been requested for reconsideration in libraries over this past year would amaze you, I'm sure. I take your concerns very seriously as do all of the staff in the youth and young adult departments. We strive to always be available to make suggestions and recommendations for you and for your daughter. I absolutely agree that these two books are not appropriate for your daughter at this time in her life.

You have requested that these books be moved to the adult area of the library. In our meeting in February, both you and Mrs. Venetta indicated that you wanted them removed to protect the young people of the City and you provided us with pages of a petition, signed by 120 individuals, to have the books moved. The library has to consider all of the people who did not sign the petition. Books of the Gossip Girls series, in particular, have been in high demand being requested from other libraries for use by our patrons. There are parents in Leesburg who have asked us to add this series to our collection and some have even donated copies. None of these books are displayed; unless they are on a shelving cart, they are properly shelved and have to be sought out by the reader on the shelves with other books.

Having read both of these books, I feel that they were correctly reviewed and are written for young adults and do not appeal to adult readers. Placing them in the adult collection will mean that young people grade 9 to 10 or ages 14 and up, who are seeking these specific titles (and the Gossip Girls series is very popular), would be encouraged to seek reading material among the items chosen for a much more mature audience. At this time, I feel that we have provided the appropriate location for these books.

I appreciate your concern and the opportunity to review our policy with specific focus. I also appreciate your sincerity in bringing this to our attention. We are very happy to work with you in helping your daughter and all of the children in the City to locate the appropriate material among the large number of items in the library, but the ultimate arbiter of those choices lies with the parents. We would be happy to share any of the documents found during this research that are written specifically to assist parents of both children and teens to help them provide guidance for their children. In addition, we have added the website for [Facts on Fiction](#) to our website to further assist parents.

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Morse, Director
Leesburg Public Library

cc: Wendy Breeden, Lake County Library Director
Jay Evans, City Manager / City of Leesburg